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ABSTRACT

The University of Colorado at Boulder is in the fifth year of a seven-year cycle of program review of academic units on the campus, primarily focusing on improving weak programs through a system of self-study designed to specifically address concerns of fairness, credibility, and usefulness. The units under review use data provided by the Office of Academic Planning, as well as faculty vitae, to analyze the department's strengths and weaknesses, undergraduate and graduate instruction in the department, research and publication productivity of the faculty, and service; and to address plans for improvement of departmental productivity. These reports and one from an external review are submitted to the Program Review Panel (PRP), which submits findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. The unit is expected to make periodic progress reports to the Vice Chancellor regarding the implementation of suggestions from the panel. The general consensus of the PRP is that the key part of the review is the self-study and that greater strength can be realized when units choose to focus their resources on a limited number of objectives. Recently, the Boulder Campus has begun a series of program enrichments representing the integration of the review process and planning and budget allocation on the campus. (PN)

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BENEFITS OF PROGRAM REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

BENEFITS OF PROGRAM REVIEW

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Presented at the RMAIR/SCUP meeting
Taos, New Mexico
October 12-14, 1983

Description of the Process

Academic program review on the Boulder Campus takes place over an academic year's time, and consists of three phases - a self-study conducted by the unit in the fall; a report by an internal review team comprised of campus faculty and students from cognate disciplines; and an external review of 2 to 3 faculty from the same discipline at other universities.

Outcomes of the Program Review Cycle on Boulder Campus

The general consensus of the Program Review Panel and other campus groups is that the key part of the review is the self-study. Departments are forced to analyze their roles within the campus, as well as their plans for faculty replacement and retirement. Individual faculty improvement-related plans are used by each department to focus activity for the next five to seven years.

Reallocation

In general, the Boulder Campus has no "reallocation pool" of funds to be shifted based on program review recommendations. However, twice in the past four years the Panel recommendations have included transfer or allocation of resources for specific purposes.

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Retrenchments

A few campus recommendations have resulted in discontinuance of admission to graduate programs. These consolidations have occurred because of a perceived weakness in faculty scholarship which could not support instruction and supervision at the graduate level. Resources in these departments are being refocused at the undergraduate and Master's level.

BENEFITS OF PROGRAM REVIEW

Historical Development of the Process

The University of Colorado at Boulder is in the fifth year of a seven year cycle of program review of academic units on the campus. While several purposes for program review have been cited in the literature (program improvement; elimination of unnecessary duplication across the campus or at a statewide level, across institutions in a state; resource reallocation, often accompanied by existence of a "reallocation" pool of resources for use by academic administration; accreditation; and program expansion), the primary focus of the program review effort on the Boulder Campus has been to improve weak programs.

The current methodology for program review was developed in conjunction with the North Central Accreditation self-study of the institution in February, 1980. In the self-study chapter which presented the campus plan for review of academic, administrative, and student academic service areas, program review's primary purpose was defined as ". . . strengthening the campus by assuring the vitality of its constituent parts."[1]

The system of review proposed in the self-study differed somewhat from a previous program review effort on the campus which had been initiated by a 1976 Chancellor's charge to an ad-hoc committee for program review. This committee, working under time constraints of approximately 9 months, reviewed academic and support units of the campus, making recommendations to the Chancellor regarding program and resource decisions. While many of the recommendations of this group were sound and were in fact implemented over a period of years, there was wide-spread concern on the campus regarding the process and perceived

[1] Self-Study Report of the University of Colorado, Boulder, February, 1980, p. 83.

lack of campus input into decisions. The new process adopted for the self-study was designed to specifically address concerns of fairness, credibility, and usefulness.

The responsibility for conducting program review in academic, administrative, and student academic service areas rests with each Vice Chancellor on the Boulder Campus. Administrative and student service reviews are currently in process. While the self-study processes are similar in nature, addressing the service role of the units to the campus, program goals and effectiveness, it is obvious that the data and specialized concerns of each area tailor the process to each unit's needs. The balance of this paper will address only the academic program review used on Boulder Campus.

The Review Process

Academic review of Boulder Campus programs is conducted by the Program Review Panel (PRP), comprised of 10 members and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, who serves in a non-voting capacity. Eight faculty members serve on the committee, along with one undergraduate and one graduate student. The Panel is chaired by the Associate Vice Chancellor for Instruction. Other non-voting members of the panel include representatives from the Faculty Assembly and the Faculty Committee on Academic Planning, Practices, and Standards. Technical support for the Panel is provided by the Office of Academic Planning.

The actual review process takes place over an academic year's time. During the fall, the units under review use data provided by Academic Planning, as well as faculty vitae, to analyze the department's strengths and weaknesses, undergraduate and graduate instruction in the department, research and publication productivity of the faculty, and service. The unit is responsible for compiling a self-study report, to be submitted to the Program Review Panel by the end of November.

Included in the self-study, the unit should address plans for improvement of departmental productivity in teaching, research, and service, beginning with individual faculty. While it is not anticipated that these detailed individual plans will be included in the final self-study document, the Panel recognizes that these sorts of individual analyses of goals and areas for improvement are necessary for the department to gain a total picture of the areas of current and potential strength. The data provided by Academic Planning comprise the technical appendix to the self-study.

During the period of the self-study, PRP members work with the departments under review, serving as liasons to the committee, and addressing concerns regarding process and issues to be addressed in the self-study report. At the same time, an internal review team comprised of faculty and students from cognate disciplines on the campus is assigned to each unit. The Internal Team works with the self-study committee, reviewing drafts of the final self-study report and making suggestions for improvement. In addition, an internal review team report is submitted to the PRP summarizing the self-study, reporting on the results of interviews conducted with faculty and students in the review unit, and making recommendations to the Program Review Panel regarding the department.

Once the self-study and internal team reports are complete, an external review of the unit is conducted, generally in the early spring. Two to three faculty from the same discipline at other universities are asked to visit the campus and to report to the Panel on issues such as program quality, areas of strength and weakness in research and teaching, governance and leadership within the department, and faculty personnel. This report is submitted to the Panel soon after the visit is completed, allowing PRP to begin its analytical process in late spring. During this time, the Panel consolidates the findings

of the three reports, and submits a set of findings and recommendations to the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs. Once this review is complete, the unit is expected to make periodic progress reports to the Vice Chancellor regarding the implementation of suggestions from the Panel.

Outcomes

Boulder Campus has approximately sixty academic departments and research units which fall under the umbrella of academic program review. These include the Museum and Library, as well as departments and divisions in Arts & Sciences, Business, Design & Planning, Education, Engineering, Journalism, Law, Music, and Pharmacy. Since program review is scheduled for a seven-year cycle, nine to ten reviews are scheduled for each academic year. Units are chosen in consultation with the Deans and department chairs. Since the inception of the program review process five years ago, forty-one units have begun the self-study process.

Over the past five years, a pattern of Program Review Panel recommendations has developed which reflect continuing concerns about the quality of the education on the Boulder Campus. A common theme in PRP deliberations is that greater strength can be realized when units choose to focus their resources on a limited number of objectives. For units which have pursued this kind of analysis in the self-study, the Panel often reiterates that faculty expertise should be developed in three or four key areas to bring national recognition to the campus. For units which have continued a policy of breadth of program and curriculum, the Panel often recommends a reexamination of diversity and the degree to which resources could be better utilized if growth were concentrated in certain subspecialties.

It is not unusual to see the following kinds of recommendations in the Program Review Panel report to the unit and to the Vice Chancellor.

• Given the department's analysis of strengths and weaknesses, the department should work to limit and give greater focus to the undergraduate and graduate curriculum, generally concentrating on three or four areas.

This kind of recommendation serves several purposes. Often curriculum revisions are necessary to create core courses and defined subspecialties in both the undergraduate and graduate areas. Program focus often makes it easier to recruit students based on particular strengths and faculty expertise. It also makes the case for unique programs in the state or region which may prove useful in budget request or state planning exercises. Curriculum definition also focuses library acquisitions and purchase of equipment or maintenance of laboratory facilities which may be critical to certain program areas.

• Given faculty strengths in teaching and research, try to differentiate workload to a greater extent.

In the past two years on Boulder Campus, a concerted effort has been made in the schools and colleges to differentiate faculty workload based on research and teaching contribution. Faculty active in research and publication often receive a lower course load in order to free time for scholarly work. Faculty with less interest in research and publication (often those who were hired when general campus expectations were different in terms of scholarly contribution) are encouraged to work with the department chair to increase teaching load.

Several issues of faculty productivity and reward are related to the concept of differential workload. One of the main issues departments address in program review is the level of faculty compensation. While it is true that the campus as a whole has been setting salary levels using a combination of market (comparison to the AAU public universities by discipline and faculty rank) and merit (departmental ratings based on teaching, service, and publication),

this same process has not been used in some departments to differentiate among faculty in terms of salary increases. The Program Review Panel has often made the recommendation that individual faculty salaries should reflect the person's relative contributions to research and teaching. In a few instances, specific personnel were targeted for faculty salary revisions consonant with the evaluation of their national reputation by the external team.

Creative solutions to individual improvement-related plans are also tied to faculty productivity and reward. In the case of some departments, faculty may require release time; in others, an adjustment to time spent in university service may be appropriate in order to increase research and scholarly publication contribution. Faculty experiencing difficulty with instruction at the undergraduate level may obtain assistance from colleagues in the department.

Where improvement plans for low-achieving faculty may seem unrealistic, departments may wish to consider the option of early retirement. Other departments may have productive faculty but a very high tenure ratio which limits the ability of the department to respond to changes in student demand or innovative fields of study. These departments may choose to respond to the need for flexibility in personnel through a visiting professor program to be funded out of leaves and replacements monies, or to "mortgage" faculty retirements for additional faculty positions. The emphasis of the self-study has been to get departments to think about self-improvement with little or no additional demand on the general fund resources of the institution.

The general consensus of the Program Review Panel and other campus groups is that the key part of the review is the self-study. Departments are forced to analyze their roles within the campus, as well as their goals and aspirations for faculty replacements and retirements. Individual faculty

improvement-related plans are used by each department to build its focus of activity for the next five to seven years. Often departments have recognized problem areas in departmental governance, curriculum, or teaching of undergraduate courses and supervision of graduate teaching assistants, and have taken steps to correct these problems before the Panel has made its final recommendations to the Vice Chancellor.

In the case of two departments on the campus (Geology and Physical Education), the program review process has been critical in identifying the changing character of the disciplines on Boulder Campus. At the time of the review, PE and Recreation was facing the transition from the traditional activities courses in physical education and PE teacher training and commercial recreation orientations to a department with a research orientation and expectation of publication for its faculty members. Faculty were faced with a different set of evaluation criteria for promotion and tenure. The evaluation process helped this department focus on its changing composition and helped all faculty to be aware of the expectations of the college and its department chair in terms of contribution to teaching and research.

The Department of Geology is also facing a transition in its research orientation from natural history to a concentration in hard science, experimentation, and quantifiable research. This rapid change in the areas of faculty research resulted in a self-study which chose to focus on the need for a new facility, additional faculty (particularly in the areas of petroleum geology and geochemistry), additional equipment, and greater emphasis on grant acquisition. While the PRP report was quite sensitive to the needs of this changing discipline and supported the renovation of existing facilities, acquisition of additional equipment through cooperative arrangements with other departments and through grant funding, it retained a degree of caution in program expansion

given the "boom and bust" nature of the oil and geology industry. Considering the number of other geological science programs in the region, the Program Review Panel asked that the department consider a focused growth in areas of current strength rather than continued expansion and diversity of academic and research programs.

Reallocations

In general, the Boulder Campus has no set of reserve funds or "reallocation pool" to be shifted based on program review recommendations. Budget revisions occur in late spring of each year in response to legislative appropriation levels. No significant pools of money are set aside from operating budgets of the various schools and colleges to facilitate shifts in resources based on unanticipated expenses, student demand, or program review findings. Any shift in resources has to come from the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs in the context of normal budgetary and faculty recruitment decisions.

However, there have been several times in the past four years when the Program Review Panel recommendations have included transfer or allocation of resources for specific purposes. During the second year of its proceedings, the Panel was given $20,000 in discretionary funds to allocate to programs under review. Departments were asked to submit proposals for supplementary funding for one time expenditures in support of instruction or research. Total requests of more than $40,000 were received. Of the $20,000, $14,500 was distributed to humanities and foreign language disciplines for library and media support of instruction; $5,000 was given to Journalism and AstroGeophysics for equipment for courses; and $500 was given to the Sociology Department as seed money to begin a course in the sociology of sexuality.

More recently, the Boulder Campus has begun a series of program enrichments totaling more than $1.4 million for the current year's allocations.

Total projected funding over 5 years for these projects on the Boulder Campus is approximately $3,850,000; other campuses of the University of Colorado system have similar projects which represent another $12,000,000 over a two-year period. Many of the Boulder plans related to program development have been identified during the program review process as areas with sufficient faculty expertise and interest to warrant further development on the campus. The programs include areas of multidisciplinary research (cognitive science, computing applications in the College of Arts and Sciences, analytical chemistry and catalysis laboratories) as well as those attached to specific departments (English, EPO Biology and basic plant science, Electrical Engineering, and Psychology). These enrichments represent the integration of the review process and planning and budget allocation on the campus. Project areas are detailed below. Asterisks indicate areas which have completed program review evaluations.

TABLE 1

1983-84 Program Enrichments

Electrical Engineering*	(faculty)
Cognitive Science (multidisciplinary)*	(faculty and equipment)
History/Culture of the Americas (multidisciplinary)*	(faculty and operating expense)
English Department*	(faculty and equipment)
Computer Applications (Arts & Sciences, multidisciplinary)*	(faculty and equipment)
Central Analytical Chemistry Lab	(equipment and renovation)
Psychology*	(equipment)
MCD Biology*	(equipment)
Basic Plant Science (multidisciplinary)*	(research associates)
Catalysis Lab	
EPO Biology* Greenhouse	(construction)
Geography	(faculty)
Geology*	(equipment)
Physics*	(equipment)
Telecommunications (multidisciplinary)*	(faculty)
Neurosciences (multidisciplinary)*	(operating expense)
Economics*	(operating expense)
Statistics (multidisciplinary)*	(operating expense)
1983-84 TOTAL ENRICHMENTS	$1,472,160

*Areas which have completed program review evaluations

Retrenchment

Other outcomes of the program review process would not necessarily be described as "beneficial" by the departments which have received the recommendations. A very few PRP decisions have led to retrenchment in the number and level of degree programs at the graduate level in Slavic languages (Ph.D.), Italian (M.A.), German (Ph.D.), and Communication (M.A. and Ph.D.). In the case of several of these programs, the recommendation for discontinuance was made after an analysis showed that admission to the program had been suspended, often years before, by the department. The consolidations in German and Communication were made because of the perception that faculty scholarship was too weak to support instruction and supervision of graduate students. Both of these units are now focusing faculty effort at the undergraduate and Master's levels.